

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0221/01 0681953
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 091953Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4600
INFO RUCNMR/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2213
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 000221

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC AND PM JEFF BURNETT
PENTAGON FOR OSD - KRISTI HUNT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM MARR SOCI CI

SUBJECT: JCS MULLEN IN CHILE: LATIN AMERICAN ENGAGEMENT A PRIORITY

REF: SANTIAGO 124

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen emphasized the priority of U.S. engagement with Latin America during his March 3 visit to Chile. In meetings with President Bachelet, Minister of Defense Goni, and Chief of National Defense Ewing, Chairman Mullen praised the U.S.-Chile relationship, noted the strong mil-to-mil cooperation between both countries, and recognized Chile's world-class armed forces. Bachelet expressed a desire for U.S. "re-engagement" in the region and highlighted the threats posed by poverty and delinquency to regional stability. She explained the South American Defense Council (SADC) seeks cooperative, not collective security and should not be viewed as a threat. Goni outlined Chile's military modernization efforts, and identified energy and the environment as important issues for the bilateral relationship. END SUMMARY

¶12. (C) In a packed one-day visit to Chile on March 3, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen had separate meetings with President Michelle Bachelet, Minister of Defense Jose Goni, and Chief of National Defense Lt. General Alfredo Ewing. The Chairman also received briefings on Chile's defense modernization plans (reftel) and its peace-keeping operations during a stop at Chile's Joint Center for Peacekeeping Operations (CECOPAC). He visited Chile's Army War College, delivering a speech and taking questions from students and staff from all three service war colleges and Chile's National Defense University-equivalent, ANEPE. El Mercurio conducted an exclusive interview with Chairman Mullen and his visit generated positive press coverage.

BACHELET URGES RE-ENGAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT WITH EQUITY

¶13. (C) President Bachelet encouraged the United States to "re-engage" with Latin America during her meeting with Chairman Mullen. Bachelet identified poverty and delinquency as major threats to the region, and expressed concern about rising global instability due to the financial crisis. She emphasized the need for "economic development with equity," and explained that Chile successfully reduced poverty through economic growth.

¶14. (C) Chairman Mullen, accompanied by the Ambassador and CJCS Executive Assistant Jamie Foggo, underscored the "special relationship" between the U.S. and Chile, adding that Chile is a strong partner. He emphasized the U.S. commitment to Latin America and highlighted his interest in engagement with the region. Chairman Mullen noted that,

unlike other regions, Latin America does not face pressing security threats.

15. (C) Chairman Mullen and Bachelet both acknowledged the enormous challenges posed by countries like Haiti, and the Chairman praised Chile's contribution to peacekeeping efforts. They agreed on the need to build government institutions that foster economic development and the rule of law, which are critical to insuring stability and promoting democracy.

SOUTH AMERICAN DEFENSE COUNCIL: "NOT A NATO SOUTH"

16. (C) President Bachelet stated the SADC should not be viewed as a threat. She said the Council seeks "unity with diversity," and is designed to promote "cooperative, not collective," security. Bachelet added the SADC objective is to develop common strategy, not common policies, because members have a duty to preserve security and stability. Chairman Mullen expressed his support for regional cooperation, and mentioned his discussion of the SADC in Brazil. He noted the good timing of the SADC and offered assurances that the United States values regional security cooperation efforts.

17. (C) In a separate meeting, Goni argued the SADC is not a "NATO South," but a venue for coordination among defense ministries in the region. Chairman Mullen complemented Goni on the GOC's ability to build relationships, and encouraged the GOC to maintain its focus. Goni stressed the importance of consensus, describing the need to create a framework for discussion to share experiences. He listed defense ministry

management, peace-keeping operations, and disaster relief as areas of common interest among SADC members. He also disclosed that Chile expects all SADC members to participate in the March 9-10 meeting and ratify the charter of the defense council.

18. (C) In her meeting with Chairman Mullen, Bachelet revealed that Colombian President Uribe and Peruvian President Garcia initially had doubts about the SADC, but they are now supportive. Uribe, in particular, worried the Council would limit his ability to formulate national policies. According to Bachelet, a conference call among the Chilean, Brazilian, and Colombian presidents assuaged Uribe's concerns.

BORDER ISSUE WITH PERU, MANTA

19. (C) Defense Minister Goni raised with Chairman Mullen the maritime border issue between Chile and Peru. Goni explained that Chile sees the issue as settled, but Peru continues to press it. He noted the GOC has diplomatic and political issues related to this subject, including a pending proceeding initiated by Peru with the International Court of Justice. Goni inquired about the future of the forward operating base in Manta, Ecuador. Chairman Mullen acknowledged the USG is focused on moving the base somewhere else, but said he was not aware of any initiative to go to Peru.

110. (C) Goni said "it's important to note" that in the other countries Chairman Mullen is visiting the armed forces are focused on internal issues, such as narco-trafficking, terrorist groups, and internal violence. (NOTE: Goni did not list the countries, but was referring to Peru, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico.) Goni emphasized the Chilean military concentrates on defending the nation from external threats, and it is not used to address domestic problems.

LOOKING AHEAD: JOINTNESS AND ENERGY

111. (C) Chairman Mullen received briefings on Chile's military modernization plans (reftel) and shared his perspective on changes to the U.S. military. He explained in

detail the challenges posed by "jointness," referring to coordinated leadership and action among all service branches.

Goni highlighted Ministry of Defense efforts to promote "jointness," and Chairman Mullen emphasized the need to pass laws and link promotions to joint service to truly effect change. In a discussion about Chile's war execution plans, which call for the Chief of National Defense to take charge of military operations, Lt. General Ewing admitted the military does not currently train for war on a joint level.

¶12. (C) Chairman Mullen further observed that "today, one can't live as a single service or as a single country, one has to work together." He emphasized the need to develop a comprehensive approach to security that incorporates the entirety of government. Chairman Mullen illustrated this by noting the U.S. military has officials working in a variety of government agencies, including the departments of State, Treasury, and Agriculture. Goni identified energy and the environment as important issues in the U.S.-Chile relationship, explaining these are new subjects and a new direction in the mil-to-mil relationship.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Chairman Mullen's visit advanced U.S. interests by sending a clear signal to the GOC that it is a valued partner with a special U.S. relationship. We concur with Chairman Mullen's viewpoint that continued engagement with close allies is imperative, even when threats are minimal and relations are good. END COMMENT

SIMONS